

P 181220Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6542
INFO ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 000900

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP AND IO; PACOM FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/20/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BM](#)

SUBJECT: MONKS MARCH AGAIN IN BURMA

REF: RANGOON 895 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol Officer Sean O'Neill for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

11. (C) Summary. On September 18, large groups of monks staged peaceful processions in Rangoon and at least three other cities in Mandalay Division and Rakhine State. We received no reports of violence and are seeking to confirm information authorities in Rangoon arrested ten monks affiliated with the protest. Authorities also reportedly arrested Tuesday Prayer Group leader Naw Ohn Hla in Rangoon today. Security was tight throughout Rangoon and other major cities in Burma. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Several hundred monks staged a procession through the streets of Rangoon today. Embassy sources and staff reported seeing as many as 500 monks march south from the northern part of the city, eventually ending up in downtown Rangoon approximately three hours later. Witnesses informed us the monks recited traditional chants calling for peace and an end to suffering, but they did not make any overt political speeches or statements. An Embassy officer observed crowds of spectators following the procession, with some offering water to the monks, but we received no reports of onlookers joining the march. We did not observe or hear of any violence and are seeking to confirm that ten monks were arrested in Rangoon.

13. (C) NLD members in the town of Kyaukbadoung in Mandalay Division reported that early on September 18, approximately 100 monks from a local monastery staged a two-hour procession through town. Witnesses said the monks recited traditional chants for peace while carrying their alms bowls upside-down, a sign of their intention to refuse donations from authorities. Sources reported similar processions by monks in Mogoke, in Mandalay Division, and Sittwe, in Rakhine State. News of a second procession in Kyaukbadoung and a subsequent curfew could not be confirmed.

14. (C) Embassy officers observed a significant security presence throughout the day in Rangoon, and sources reported a similarly high security posture in other major cities and said expectations of further protests remain. Authorities in Rangoon closed several major roads as well as Shwe Dagon Pagoda, the city's largest. DEA contacts report Burma's Director General of Police, Khin Yi, is expected to move to Rangoon from Nay Pyi Taw in order to monitor the situation.

15. (C) NLD sources informed us Tuesday Prayer Campaign leader Naw Ohn Hla was arrested outside her home in Rangoon

on September 18. Witnesses reported approximately 15 men forced her and local NLD member Htet Oo Way into an awaiting car and drove them away. NLD sources reported she was on her way to lead a weekly prayer vigil for Aung San Suu Kyi's release at Shwe Dagon Pagoda.

VILLAROSA